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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ETRD](#) [KOLY](#) [FR](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: SINO-FRENCH RELATIONS: DESPITE OUTCRY, IT COULD BE WORSE

REF: A. OSC/FBIS CPP20080422508002

- [1](#)B. OSC/FBIS CPP20080422968057
- [1](#)C. 07 BEIJING 6376
- [1](#)D. 07 BEIJING 6716
- [1](#)E. BEIJING 1550
- [1](#)F. OSC/FBIS CPP20080422075001

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson. Reasons 1.4
(B/D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Despite recent well-publicized protests and calls for boycotts of French companies, Sino-French relations are not in a downward spiral, French Embassy Counselor Erkki Maillard told PolOff April 23. The Chinese Government appears to be taking a firm public line on France to assuage nationalistic sentiments at home while simultaneously taking steps to ensure that relations with France remain stable. At this time, no major visits have been cancelled, and high-level official exchanges and dialogue are continuing as before. According to Maillard, France's placating of Chinese displeasure seems to have worked with the Chinese Government if not the Chinese people. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Recent Chinese public indignation over protests at the Paris stage of the Olympic Torch Run centered on widely circulated photos of what appeared to be protestors attacking wheelchair-bound Paralympic athlete Jin Jing in an attempt to wrestle the torch away from her. Chinese public furor over the incident prompted French President Sarkozy to dispatch French Senate Speaker Christian Poncelet to China to hand-deliver a letter from the president expressing his regret (ref A). The Torch Run protests and Internet rumors that French companies finance the Dalai Lama have resulted in nationalistic demonstrations in China and calls for a boycott of French companies, including Louis Vuitton and Carrefour.

[1](#)3. (C) Official Chinese comment on current relations with France has been tight-lipped. MFA European Department France Division officials declined to comment, but MFA Spokeswoman Jiang Yu, during the regular biweekly press conference April 22, urged France to "respond positively to the Chinese people's reasonable appeals" regarding Tibet, as well as to "show understanding and support for the legitimate and necessary measures" taken to maintain order. Simultaneously, Jiang reaffirmed that China "cherishes" its friendly relations with France and said former Chinese Ambassador to France Zhao Jinjun visited Paris April 18-22 to act as special representative on behalf of Chinese President Hu Jintao (refs E and F).

[1](#)4. (C) French Embassy Counselor Erkki Maillard told PolOff April 23 that the Government of France, mindful of the downturn in Sino-German relations that followed German Chancellor Angela Merkel's September 23 meeting with the

Dalai Lama (refs C and D), is dispatching several representatives to smooth tensions, including former Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin and Diplomatic Advisor to the President Jean-David Levitte. However, Maillard said, despite the public hew and cry, French relations with China are not in a downward spiral. China has so far not canceled any scheduled high-level visits or French programs in China.

15. (C) Maillard said the Chinese government is currently taking a firm public line on France to avoid appearing soft, while simultaneously continuing to encourage dialogue and exchange with France. Despite the public bluster, Maillard feels Sino-French relations are nowhere near as rocky as Sino-German relations were following Chancellor Merkel's September 23 meeting with the Dalai Lama. Conciliatory measures from the French, including a speedy apology from the President over the Torch Run incident and repeated statements from French companies that they do not finance the Dalai Lama, appear to have appeased the Chinese Government, if not necessarily the Chinese people, Maillard said.

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